



Mine the wealth of diverse talent

As the economy slows, so does the war for talent. But when the recession fades, the scramble to find and hire talent will resume, and it will be the organizations best prepared for a new type of workforce who will prevail.

According to Martha Artiles, chief diversity officer for Manpower Inc., who presented during a Feb. 18, 2009 Conference Board webinar, the talent crunch is very real. "Numbers are numbers," states Artiles, "we clearly have a population that is ready for retirement and a group of younger people too small to replace them."

Two factors are coming together to enhance the urgency of the forthcoming shortage – the aging baby boomers and the projected job growth in occupations that require advanced education and skill sets. "Many of the jobs identified include positions such as sales, accounting and finance, IT and engineering," says Artiles, noting that the diverse skill sets among people who have disabilities widen the pool of candidates for employers needing to fill these types of positions.

In its *Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities*, the Employer Assistance & Resource Network (EARN) stresses the importance of "having the right talent at the right place at the right time." Expanding recruiting, hiring and retention strategies to include people who have disabilities is a viable way to do just that.

According to EARN, businesses profit from this talent pool. Indeed, businesses profiled in EARN's Business Case all agree. A representative from A & F Wood Products, Inc. states:

The focus is the business. And however we can make the business run to create the jobs, and to grow the business, that's really the bottom line. All employees, they're the backbone of the company. And we're finding out in a hurry, and I think others will, too, if they give it a try, that the [employees who have disabilities] are a major part of your backbone.

Businesses that have integrated recruiting people who have disabilities are better because of it. They are benefitting from increased productivity and other bottom-line results. The evidence is mounting. Recruiting and hiring people who have disabilities is smart business.